

# Mountaintop Removal Pros And Cons

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Mountain top removal is a type of mining process where the entire tops of mountains are blown off in order to open them up. It is a drastic procedure, and has gained quite a bit of unwanted attention in the past few years. Many groups have come together to ban against mountain top removal due to the effects it has on the environment and towns that they are located in. Not everything associated with this mining practice is necessarily bad though.

## Pros of Mountaintop Removal

### **It Provides High Paying Jobs For Communities That Need Them**

Mountaintop removal is a skilled mining task, which means that it will pay a relatively high salary. Because many of these mines tend to be in some of the poorest areas of the world, it can provide an economic boost to the local area through the hiring of hundreds of local workers who live, shop, and find entertainment options at home.

### **It Allows For Infrastructure Development**

Once a mountaintop has been removed, it becomes a viable piece of land for development. In

places where mountaintop mining has been successfully completed, the land has been transformed into golf courses, airports, highway interchanges, and even shopping centers.

### **It Is Cheaper Than Traditional Forms Of Coal Mining**

The clean coal mining industry looks to reduce atmospheric pollution while also reducing the costs of obtaining the coal that needs to be burned for power. Mountaintop mining, when done correctly, is able to accomplish both of these goals rather effectively.

## **Cons of Mountaintop Removal**

### **The Operations Can Impact The Local Water Table**

It is not uncommon for mountaintop mining to change the quality of the local ground water that is available to a community. This is often seen in the form of an increase or decrease in the amount of minerals that are present. In turn, this can also negatively impact local wildlife, eliminate fish species, and create less animal diversity.

### **It Could Contribute To An Increased Level Of Birth Defects.**

Although only a few studies have pointed out this potential link, the changes in mineral content and atmospheric quality where a mountaintop coal mine is present could also be responsible for higher levels of birth defects. If true, then is the need for cheaper, cleaner coal worth harming children?

### **It Changes How Local Lands Can Be Used**

Mountaintop removal often creates wet spots that can be used for aquatic life, but the water is not often fit for consumption. Slurry ponds are required and these can often divide forests. Streams and rivers may have their routes changed because of these land changes and in severe circumstances, mud flows might become a future possibility.

If we are able to weight the pros and cons of mountaintop removal for coal mining, then we can determine if this is a practice we should continue. There are definite cost-savings

advantages that can be seen, but this comes at the expense of local geological changes. Only the local population can determine if the benefits outweigh the risks.

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